(U) Trade Jargon: Got Your 'Ears'?

FROM: SIGINT Communications
Unknown
Run Date: 12/12/2003

(U//FOUO) There are many different professions at work within SID, and each speaks its own specialized "language". Once a person becomes accustomed to hearing the jargon, it becomes second nature - but an outsider sitting in on a typical SID meeting would likely have no idea what's going on! We thought it would be interesting to document some of this "SID jargon" - we'll start by looking at the vocabulary of one of the core SIGINT professions: transcription.

(U//FOUO) Transcription is sometimes confused with translation. What's the difference? When you are translating, you take something (written or oral) in one language and convert it into another. Transcription, on the other hand, is when a person listens to a person talking and writes down (in the original language) what was said. Sounds easy? It isn't! Aside from the fact that the sound quality may not be the greatest, there's the need to be proficient in a foreign language, not to mention that the speakers may have dialects, quirks of speech, use unfamiliar slang, etc.

(U//FOUO) Here's a list of commonly used transcription terms. It may give some insight into what it's like to be a transcriber (or "scribe" for short)!:

● **"foot pedal"** : a device used to allow the scribe to back up, play, fast forward, etc. a recording using his feet, thereby freeing up the hands for typing.

● **"rock on it"** : the act of listening to a certain garbled word over and over to try to figure out what is being said.

● **"A%"** (called A-value or simply A-val): a marking used by a scribe to note "I am positive that's what's being said." This contrasts with "B%", which means, "I *think* that's what's being said," or "C%" which means, "That's what it sounds like, but I can't nail down what the word is." In a transcript, such a term might appear something like this: "Mr. Smith(B%) said he was the director of the newly-formed company."

● **"read"** : this is a scale indicating how clear a recording is. A read of 1 indicates that there is nothing intelligible. A read of 5 (the highest, called "5-by") means near perfect audio quality. You might hear a scribe say, "This read of 2 is terrible! I can only pick out a word here and there!"

● **"a cut"** : a recorded conversation. "There was nothing to report on the first three cuts, but the reporters will want us to work on the fourth cut asap, as a VIP was speaking!"

● **"voice id"** : when a scribe knows a speaker's voice so well that he can identify the person on that basis alone. "The caller didn't say his name, but the senior scribe knew the voice well enough to do a voice id on the person: it was Mr. Jones."

● **"ears"** : a scribe's earphones. "Put on your ears and come listen to this cut."

● **"ui fem"** : an unidentified female. "A ui fem came on the line and asked to speak to the operator." The counterpart to this is "ui male".

● **"scan"** : to listen quickly through a recording to determine whether or not it merits transcription.

● **"a gist"** : when a scribe summarizes in English what was said in a conversation. "It was very long and complicated, so I did a gist to explain what was happening."

- **"qc"** : quality control. An experienced scribe usually qc's the work of a beginner to check for accuracy.

- **"ntr"** : nothing to report.

- **"1-2G"** : one or two words are garbled. "XG" means an indeterminate number of words are garbled. Likewise, "1-2M" means "1 or 2 words missing."

- **"reverse dictionary"** : a working aid that lists the words of a language alphabetically starting with the last letter and working towards the first letter. (So in the Latin alphabet, words ending in "a"- rather than those starting with "a" - would be at the front of the reverse dictionary.) This is used when the first part of a word is garbled or indistinct, but the end is clear. Let's say a scribe hears "....partment". He can refer to the reverse dictionary to search for a word that would make sense in the context of the sentence (e.g. *com* partment, *de* partment, etc.)

- **"a false friend"** : a foreign language word that is similar to an English word, but has a different meaning.

(U//FOUO) Do you work in a profession with unique jargon? We'd very much like to publish similar lists for other skill fields - sound out your peers for some terms and make a list! We look forward to hearing from you.